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ANNUAL PHILOSOPHICAL LECTURE

HENRIETTE HERTZ TRUST

THE NATURE OF UNIVERSALS AND PROPOSITIONS

By G. F. STOUT

FELLOW OF THE ACADEMY

Read December 14, 1921

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There are various types or forms of unity which may all be regarded as partial phases of the unity of the universe. There is the unity of the complex of qualities qualifying the same thing or concrete individual. There is the unity of space and time or space-time. There is the teleological unity, exemplified in a living organism. And there are others which I need not enumerate. It is only with one of these that I am here directly concerned—the unity of a class or kind as including its members or instances. What I am going to mean by the term 'universal' is either this unity itself, if it is taken as ultimate, or if it is not taken as ultimate, whatever principle is supposed to account for it. I mean what Mr. Bosanquet names the abstract universal in distinction from other forms of unity which he names concrete universals. The so-called abstract universal is, no doubt, when considered by itself, relatively superficial and shallow. None the less, it is vitally important, inasmuch as it is presupposed in all other forms of unity, so that without it there can be no thought. Hence the view taken of it by a philosopher essentially contributes to determine his whole philosophical position.

I hold myself that the unity of a class or kind is quite ultimate, and that any attempt to analyse it leads to a vicious circle. But this is not the traditional view, and it is not the view taken by leading philosophers of the present day such as Mr. Bradley, Mr. Bosanquet, Mr. Bertrand Russell, Mr. McTaggart, and Mr. W. F. Johnson in his recent admirable work on Logic. According to these writers, qualities and relations, as such, are universals. They are so inasmuch as the same relation may severally and separately relate distinct sets of terms, and the same qualities may be common to many distinct

particular things. A plurality of particular things, sharing a common character, is a logical class, signified by a general term. The diverse particulars are the denotation, and the common character is the connotation of the general or distributive term applicable to each member of the class. Thus, the unity of a class or kind is regarded as derivative, not ultimate. It is constituted by the identity of some character, simple or complex, characterizing the things denoted by the general name. The identity of the character is interpreted strictly and literally. There is no plurality of particular qualities corresponding to the plurality of particular things. The common quality is regarded as indivisibly single. Two billiard balls are both round and smooth. So far as they are both round, the roundness of the one is the roundness of the other, and so far as they are both smooth, the smoothness of the one is the smoothness of the other. Abstract nouns, as standing for the quality in its singleness, without reference to any multiplicity of things qualified by it, are thus regarded as singular terms, like proper names. If we ask how, for example, shape can be identical both in square things and round things, the best answer is that of Mr. Johnson, who distinguishes between indeterminate and determinate characters. Shape is a single indeterminate character capable of being variously determined as square, round, or triangular. Similarly for relations. My nose is above my chin, and Smith's nose is above Smith's chin. His nose is distinct from mine, and the same is true of our chins. But there is the single identical relation of 'above and below' which relates both my nose to my chin and his nose to his chin. The question whether relations are or are not characters predicable of things is not here relevant. In order, however, to explain my language in what follows, I may say that I hold them to be predicable characters. I agree entirely with Mr. Johnson's treatment of the question in his chapter on Relations. 'My nose is above my chin' means 'my nose is to my chin as above to below, the nose being above and the chin below'.

This whole doctrine which I have roughly outlined, of the singleness of characters, whether qualities or relations, seems to me fundamentally wrong. A character characterizing a concrete thing or individual is as particular as the thing or individual which it characterizes. Of two billiard balls, each has its own particular roundness separate and distinct from that of the other, just as the billiard balls themselves are distinct and separate. As Jones is separate and distinct from Robinson, so the particular happiness of Jones is separate and distinct from that of Robinson. What then do we mean when we say,

for instance, that roundness is a character common to all billiard balls? I answer that the phrase 'common character' is elliptical. It really signifies a certain general kind or class of characters. To say that particular things share in the common character is to say that each of them has a character which is a particular instance of this kind or class of characters. The particular instances are distributed amongst the particular things and so shared by them. It is true that the term 'class' tends in ordinary usage to be applied to classes of things, whereas such words as 'kind' or 'sort' are naturally applied also to qualities and relations. My point is that these terms all express the same ultimate form of unity, the distributive unity which comprehends what are for that reason called members of a class, instances or examples of a sort or kind. To define a general term exclusively by reference to classes of things, therefore, involves a vicious circle. There is no generality in substances which is not entirely derivative. It is wholly constituted by the generality of the adjectives which qualify them, and the generality of adjectives does not consist ultimately in possessing common adjectives.

Abstract nouns are, on my view, not singular but general terms. Shape, for example, stands for 'all shapes as such', and squareness stands for all square shapes as such. On the other hand, the shape of the table at which I am now writing is a singular term. Abstract nouns supply the appropriate verbal form for naming qualities and relations when they are to be themselves characterized by other qualities and relations, as when we say that 'human happiness is transient'. Adjectives and verbs supply the appropriate verbal form for attributing characters to things. The statement found in some text-books of Logic that adjectives are not names of qualities but of the things they qualify is, of course, nonsense.

The position that characters are as particular as the concrete things or individuals which they characterize, is common to me and the nominalists. But I differ from them essentially in maintaining that the distributive unity of a class or kind is an ultimate and unanalysable type of unity. The nominalists, on the contrary, say that it can be explained through the relation of resemblance. This view seems to me entirely indefensible. Distributive unity is signified by such words as 'all', 'every', 'any', 'some', and the indefinite article. Can the meaning of these words be stated adequately in terms of resemblance? This is plainly impossible. Consider the example 'all triangles'. It may be said that this means all shapes that resemble each other in a certain respect. But such formulas pre-

suppose that the word 'all' has a meaning of its own that cannot be reduced to relations of similarity. It is precisely the concept of distributive unity which remains unexplained. The nominalist entirely fails to show how we can think of a class or kind as a whole without setting out before our mind each one of its members or instances so as to discern relations of similarity between them. Yet he cannot help tacitly assuming that this is not required for our apprehension of the class as a whole. Berkeley, for example, says that we take a given particular triangle as representing all other figures which resemble it in a certain respect. But this is nonsense, unless we can think of all the other figures as one total object without severally apprehending each of them or indeed any one of them.

What again is meant by resemblance in a certain respect? In what respect must figures resemble each other to be classed as triangles? Shall we say 'by being enclosed by three lines'? The answer is a good one if we suppose that three-sidedness is a single quality indivisibly present in the plurality of things which it qualifies. But nominalism is based on a denial of this position. Hence in the mouth of the nominalist the answer can only mean that the figures must resemble each other inasmuch as they are all triangles—inasmuch as they are all members of the class 'triangular figures'. This is plainly a vicious circle, when what requires to be explained is precisely the meaning of the words 'class' or 'kind'.

How then, it may be asked, are relations of resemblance connected with the distributive unity of a class or kind? My own view is briefly as follows. A relation considered as subsisting between terms presupposes some complex unity within which both the terms and relations fall. This complex unity is the *fundamentum relationis*. For example, a relation of 'above and below' as subsisting between *a* and *b* presupposes a spatial complex including both *a* and *b* and the spatial relation between them. In like manner, resemblance presupposes a complex unity of the peculiar type which I call the distributive unity of a class. The same holds for dissimilarity so far as this admits of degrees, as between colours, and does not amount to disparity which makes comparison impossible, as between colours and sounds. The unity of the complex as a whole ought not to be confused with relations between terms. Thus the resemblance is always between members of a class of things or particular instances of a kind of quality. The unity of the class or kind as a whole is not a relation at all. It is what, with Mr. Johnson's permission, I should like to call a 'tie'—a *fundamentum relationis*.

Agreeing with the nominalist that characters are as particular as the things or substances they characterize, the inference I draw from this thesis is not that there really are no universals, but that the universal is a distributive unity. I have now to defend this thesis and consider some of the implications.

It will be convenient to begin with characters which consist in transient states, acts, or processes, e.g. a sneeze, the flight of a bird, the explosion of a mine. These are so obviously particular that they present a special difficulty for those who hold that qualities and relations are, as such, universals. The difficulty is so pressing that it has driven more than one recent writer to assert that transient states or acts are substances, not characters of substances. Mr. McTaggart, for example, after defining a substance as that which has qualities or relations but is not itself a quality or relation, writes as follows (*Nature of Existence*, p. 73): 'A sneeze would not usually be called a substance, nor would a party at whist, nor all red-haired archdeacons. But each of the three complies with our definition, since each of them has qualities and each is related without being a quality or relation'. Mr. McTaggart's definition is defective. If we are not to ignore a fundamental and relevant distinction we must add to it that a substance must be a particular existence and not a universal. This excludes the red-haired archdeacons. We may pass the whist party, considered as a group of men sitting at a table and playing a game. A sneeze is certainly particular. But it is equally certain that it is not a substance, even according to McTaggart's definition. It may indeed have characters predicated of it: it may be violent and inconvenient. But it is also a character predicable of something else, the particular man who sneezes. It has its being only in its concrescence with the other qualities and relations of the concrete individual while he is sneezing. The sneeze cannot continue to exist in however altered a form apart from the sneezer, as a hand or eye may when severed from the body. Similarly, when Mr. Johnson says that a flash of lightning is a substance, I admit that this is true of the lightning, while it flashes but not of the flashing of the lightning.

We may then assume that at least a large and important group of characters are as particular as the substances which they characterize. Is this true of all qualities and relations? It must be so, because there is no distinction of substances as separate particulars which does not involve a corresponding distinction of their characters as separate particulars. I apprehend two billiard balls as separate substances, inasmuch as each is taken to be in a separate place. One is here and

the other there on the surface of the billiard table. How can I know or suppose this unless I know or suppose that the roundness, smoothness, and whiteness of the one ball is locally separate from the roundness, smoothness, and whiteness of the other, and that the relation of contact between the one ball and the cloth is locally separate from the contact between the other ball and the cloth?

It has been objected that what is really the same indivisible quality may none the less appear separately in different times and places. There is here, I think, a serious confusion between two senses of the word 'appear'. We say that something may appear to be what it is not. So used, appearing is synonymous with seeming. But we also say not that something appears or seems to exist, or to be this or that, but simply that it appears, meaning that it is an actual apparition, that it is actually presented or given in experience. In this sense, nothing can really appear except what really is, and really is as it appears. I may, in double vision, have two images of a single candle flame. There then appear or *seem* to be two candle flames, whereas in fact there is only one. But the visual presentations not only appear or seem to exist and be separate. Both they and their separation really appear, are really presented or given, and must therefore really exist. It is only because the images really exist and are really separate that there appear or seem to be two flames. Now, when it is said that, for instance, the brightness of one light appears separately from the brightness of another, what is meant is simple appearance and not seeming. This must be so, because the separate appearance is taken as explaining how the qualities may seem to be separate though they are not, just as the double image explains why the single candle flame seems to be double. But the explanation refutes itself. If the qualities of separate things really appear separately, and if their separateness really appears, then they really are separate, and do not merely seem to be so.

I may restate my general argument in another way. Whatever view may be held of the distinction of a substance from its qualities, it is almost universally admitted that the substance is nothing *apart from* its qualities. Mr. McTaggart makes this proposition the basis of an argument to show that substances cannot be diverse without being in some respect dissimilar. In this he may be right. But the same principle seems also to lead to a conclusion which he would reject, that qualities are distinct particulars, just as substances are. If substance is nothing apart from its qualities, to know the substance without knowing its qualities is to know nothing.

It follows that we cannot distinguish substances from each other without discerning a corresponding distinction between their qualities. It follows also that if the distinction of the substances is not preconditioned by any discerned dissimilarity between their qualities, the qualities must be primarily known as separate particulars, not as universals. The universals will be involved only inasmuch as they are particulars of the same general sort or kind. Now in looking, let us say, at a sheet of white paper, I am able to discern the several parts of the paper without discerning qualitative unlikeness between each part and every one of the others. Even if I am aware of qualitative unlikeness between one part and some other part I can clearly recognize that this is not the primary ground of the distinction between them. Whether I suppose the unlikeness to be great or almost imperceptible or quite absent, diversity is still discernible. Indeed if it were not presupposed, there could be no question of likeness or unlikeness. Nor can we say that each part is distinguishable by its distinctive relations to other parts. For in order that one particular may be known as related in the required way to other particulars, it is a logical precondition that it shall itself be known as one particular among others.

In this argument I have assumed that a thing is nothing apart from its characters, and that therefore there can be no knowledge of it which is not knowledge of its characters. But Mr. Bertrand Russell and, I believe, Mr. Moore reverse this reasoning. According to them, knowledge of a thing as in any way characterized, is only knowledge about it, and presupposes a logically prior and independent knowledge of the things themselves, which they call acquaintance. Hence they would argue that inasmuch as things can be known independently of any knowledge of their characters, it cannot be true, as I have assumed, that they are nothing apart from their characters. Mere acquaintance with a thing is supposed to involve no apprehension of anything which could possibly be predicated of it. What is known in this way cannot be expressed in words. I am acquainted with a colour presentation while it is being presented, and with a toothache while I am feeling it. If, however, I am aware of the toothache as being painful or intense, or as felt, or as existing, or as mine, or as beginning, persisting, or ceasing, or as in any way distinct from or connected with anything else, or even as being 'something or other', such awareness is knowledge *about* the toothache and not merely acquaintance with it. Acquaintance with the toothache consists in the fact that it is felt, not in knowledge of this

or any other fact. Acquaintance with a colour presentation consists in the fact that it is presented, not in knowledge of this fact or of any other.

I do not at all doubt that what is here called acquaintance really exists. Without it there can be no knowledge, for if we were not acquainted with some things we could not know anything. It is what I have called actual appearance as distinguished from seeming. It constitutes the radical meaning of the word 'experience' which gives distinctive significance to all its other applications. It is what, following Mr. Bradley, I have been accustomed to call immediate experience. But it cannot, I think, be properly regarded as knowledge. It is true that I can know about a toothache while I am actually experiencing it, as I cannot know about it while I am not experiencing it. And we may perhaps call this way of knowing, knowledge by acquaintance. Still, the knowledge is only knowledge *about*, and is distinct from the acquaintance which conditions it. How, indeed, can we know anything, if it is supposed that we know absolutely nothing about it?

Let us, however, for the sake of argument, concede that acquaintance, as such, is knowledge. There is still no ground for regarding it as a knowledge merely of things, apart from their qualities and relations. It is true, indeed, that we do not know *about* the qualities and relations when we are merely acquainted with them. We do not know that they exist or what they are. We do not distinguish them from each other or from the things they characterize. If reasons of this sort prove that we do not know the qualities, they prove equally that we do not know the thing qualified. For in mere acquaintance, we do not know that the thing exists or what it is: we do not distinguish it from other things or from its qualities. If we can know the thing in this blind way, then in the same blind way we can know its characters. If we inquire what in mere acquaintance we are acquainted with, mere acquaintance itself, being blind and dumb, can supply no answer. The answer must be sought in analytic judgements which involve knowledge about. But these judgements never reveal a mere thing apart from its characters, but always the thing as in some way characterized. Both for mere acquaintance with things and for knowledge about them the principle holds good that a substance, being nothing apart from its adjectives, cannot be known apart from them.

At this point, we are confronted by the ultimate question. What is the distinction between a substance on the one hand, and its

qualities and relations on the other? To me only one view appears tenable. A substance is a complex unity of an altogether ultimate and peculiar type, including within it all characters truly predicable of it. To be truly predicable of it is to be contained within it. The distinctive unity of such a complex is *concreteness*. Characters of concrete things are particular, but not concrete. What is concrete is the whole in which they coalesce with each other. This view of substance as a complex unity, when coupled with the doctrine that qualities and relations are universals, leads naturally, if not inevitably, to the denial of an ultimate plurality of substances. This is the line of thought which we find in Mr. Bradley and Mr. Bosanquet. Reality must be concrete and individual; the individual cannot be constituted by any mere union of universals. Yet if we inquire what so-called finite individuals are, we find nothing but qualities and relations, which, as such, are taken to be universals. Hence, the true individual transcends the grasp of finite thought. There can be only one substance, the absolute and individual whole of being; all finite existences including finite selves are merely adjectives of this. If taken as ultimate they are mere appearances.

On the other hand, those who maintain that there is an ultimate plurality of substances, and yet hold that characters are, as such, universals, seem logically bound to deny that a substance is the complex unity of all its qualities and relations. Thus Mr. McTaggart, who occupies this position, asserts in his *Unity of Existence*, ch. v, that the complex unity is itself only a complex adjective, and therefore presupposes a subject ultimately distinct from itself. I have elsewhere criticized this view on the ground that it makes the whole being of substance consist in its relatedness to something else, to the characters which characterize it. Mr. McTaggart now replies that when, for instance, 'Smith is said to be happy', the fact that he is happy is the primary fact, and the fact that he is related to the quality of happiness is only derivative (p. 70). But this leaves my difficulty untouched. What Mr. McTaggart calls the primary fact, the happy Smith, is, according to him, a complex containing two existences ultimately quite distinct from each other, the substance, on the one hand, and, on the other, all characters predicable of it. But two distinct existences within a complex can only be connected by a relation; and the relation in this case can be no other than what is directly expressed in such propositions as 'Smith is happy'.

Mr. McTaggart also directly attacks the alternative view that the substance is the complex unity comprehending what for that reason

are called its characters. Unfortunately his argument starts with a misunderstanding. 'It has', he says, 'been maintained that we shall, if we take the right view, be able to dispense with the conception of substance and use only the conception of qualities.' This is certainly not what I take to be the right view. For me, the concrete complex containing all the characters of a thing is not a character but the thing itself. To say that the inclusive complex must itself be a predicable character, is like saying that a triangle must be the side of a triangle, that the class 'horses' must be a horse. What remains of Mr. McTaggart's argument, after we have allowed for such misunderstanding, amounts only to this, that a proposition such as 'Smith is happy' cannot, without absurdity, be formulated in the language of my theory. We cannot, he urges, assert of the complex comprising all characters predicable of Smith that this complex is happy. We cannot. But this rendering of 'Smith is happy' is not mine. Mine would rather be: 'The concrete unity including the character of being known by the name of Smith also includes the character of being happy.' This, I take it, is precisely what is meant by asserting that Smith is happy. The formula given by McTaggart itself needs to be translated in terms of my theory. So translated it would run:—'The complex including all the characters of Smith includes, besides these, another character of Smith, that of being happy.' This is nonsense. But in my view there is no reason why it should be sense.

There still remains one question which I have not yet considered, though it is of vital importance to my general argument. If I am right, what is meant by a character common to a class of things is a general kind of character of which a particular instance characterizes each member of the class. It follows that the logical division of a wider class into mutually exclusive subclasses according to the same *fundamentum divisionis* is possible only through a corresponding division of a wider class of characters into subclasses of characters. This view is, of course, quite incompatible with the position of those who regard a common character as a single quality or relation indivisibly belonging to each and all of the things it characterizes. Have they any alternative explanation? I know of no other than that which is offered in ch. xi of Mr. Johnson's *Logic*, on 'The Determinable'.

Mr. Johnson begins by comparing the propositions 'Red is a colour' and 'Plato is a man'. He inquires whether Red is asserted to be a member of a class called 'colours', as Plato is asserted to be

a member of the class 'men'. He simply takes for granted without discussion, that redness at any rate, if not colour, is a singular term, standing for a single quality and not for a general kind of qualities. He thus, from my point of view, partially begs the question at issue from the outset. In his way of dealing even with the problem as he himself formulates it, there seems to be a similar *petitio principii*. He decides that 'colours' does not stand for a class of which redness is a member. The sole reason which he gives is that whereas Plato, for example, is recognized as a man through the quality of humanity common to him and other men, it is not true that red is recognized as a colour through a quality distinct from itself and common to it and other colours such as blue and yellow. But this is merely to assert, what is in any case evident, that inasmuch as substances are not qualities, classes of substances are not classes of qualities. On any view, the division of substances into classes is in some way dependent on a corresponding distinction between their adjectives. It presupposes that, in some sense, a plurality of things share in a common character. The only question is, what is meant by their sharing in a common character? I take this to mean that each is characterized by a particular instance of a general kind or class of characters. We may if we choose apply the term class exclusively to general kinds of substances. But the real question is whether the words 'kind' and 'class' stand for the same ultimate type of distributive unity, which is found in substance, only because and so far as it is found in their characters, and cannot therefore be ultimately different for substances and for characters.

This is not Mr. Johnson's view. Does he offer any tenable alternative? Instead of the distinction between general and particular, and between more and less general, he would in dealing with characters substitute the distinction of the determinable and the completely or relatively determinate. 'To predicate *colour* or *shape* of an object', he says, 'obviously characterizes it less determinately than to predicate of it *red* or *circular*; hence the former adjective may be said . . . to be indeterminate as compared with the latter.'

There is certainly a sense in which this distinction is valid and useful. If I know or consider merely the fact that something is a colour, this does not determine what special sort of colour it is. This is determined only by further propositions in which it is asserted to be red or to be blue. So understood, the distinction is relative to the knowing mind. It is what Mr. Johnson calls 'epistemic'.[1]

[1] The proper form is 'epistemonic', but the barbarism is convenient.

In this sense I am myself prepared to use the terms determinable and determinate. But in this sense the distinction is applicable to substances as well as adjectives. If I consider something merely as being an animal, this leaves undetermined the question whether it is a mouse or a man.

Mr. Johnson, of course, means far more than this. For him the relation of determinable is constitutive, not merely epistemonic. It is a relation between qualities as such; and for qualities it takes the place of the distinction between degrees of generality which is supposed to hold only for substances. According to Johnson, colour is not a general kind of quality comprising redness as a sub-kind. On the contrary, colour and redness are both singular, each standing for a single positive quality. Colour, he tells us, 'though it is indeterminate, is, metaphorically speaking, that from which the specific determinates, red, yellow, green, &c., emanate; while from shape emanate another completely different series of determinates such as triangular, square, octagonal, &c. Thus our idea of this or that determinable has a distinctly positive context, which would be quite inadequately represented by the word indeterminate.' On this view the proposition 'red is a colour' means that a single positive quality red is related to another positive quality colour by a peculiar relation appropriately named that of a determinate to its determinable. Now it seems to me that Mr. Johnson has not only failed to show that there is such a relation, but that he has also, in the course of his argument, suggested a cogent reason for denying it. He points out very clearly that red is not recognized as a colour through any quality distinct from itself and shared in common by it and all colours, as redness is shared by all red things. As he puts it, 'the several colours . . . are given the same name colour, not on the ground of any partial agreement, but on the ground of a special kind of difference which distinguishes one colour from another.' I would add that there is a peculiar kind of resemblance as well as of difference. The point is that red and yellow do not resemble each other in one character and differ in another. The respect in which they are alike, i. e. colour, is also the respect in which they are dissimilar. The same holds for squareness and roundness. As the late Professor Cook Wilson used to say, 'square shape is not squareness plus shape; squareness itself is a special way of being a shape.'

Are considerations of this sort inconsistent with my view that redness is a subclass of the more general class 'colour' as red things is a subclass of coloured things? There would be an inconsistency only

if it could be shown that a red thing is distinguished from a yellow thing not merely by its colour but by some other character. But, as Mr. Johnson himself expressly points out, this is not so. In the logical division of a class of things into subclasses, the *fundamentum divisionis* is always a determinable adjective predicated of every member of the class divided; and the subclasses are always distinguished by determinates of this determinable. It is true, indeed, that a concrete thing is, or implies, the concrete union of many characters which are not related to each other as determinable and determinate. Hence it is possible to select this or that indeterminate adjective, simple or complex, as a basis of division. Thus we divide books according to their size or according to their binding. But a subclass is never distinguished by the presence or absence of a fresh adjective which is not indeterminately applicable to all members of the wider class. When we divide books into bound or unbound, the *fundamentum* is the status of books as regards binding; the term unbound has a positive meaning as applied to books which it would not have if applied to coals or candles.

There is nothing in these statements which is not fully accounted for if we suppose that the distinction of general and particular and of degrees of generality in things is constituted by, and therefore presupposes, a precisely corresponding distinction of general and particular, and of degrees of generality in adjectives. On the other hand, Mr. Johnson's view is not really self consistent. Assuming as he does that redness is a singular term, and denying that colour is a class including rednesss as a member, he is bound to regard colour also as a singular term. As such it can only stand for a single quality, just as redness stands for a single quality. What, then, can be meant by saying that red, green, or blue are colours? What is asserted cannot be that each is identical with colour. For they would, then, be identical with each other. We seem compelled to say that redness is in part identical with colour and in part different. It must be a complex including the indeterminate quality colour which is equally present in blue and green, and also a determining quality which distinguishes it from blue and green. But as Mr. Johnson has himself shown, this is untrue. There is no determining quality which makes the determinable determinate. We must, therefore, give up the initial assumption that redness and colour are singular terms.

They are both general, i.e. distributive terms. Redness, considered as a completely determinate general term, stands for the distributive unity of particular reds. To be a particular red is to be *either* this,

that, or the other particular instance of redness. Redness in general is comprised within a more comprehensive unity called 'colour in general', which also comprises yellowness and blueness. Every particular instance of redness is a particular instance of colour. Colour in general is nothing but the distributive unity of its specific sub-kinds, just as these are ultimately the distributive unity of their particular instances. To be a particular colour is to be a particular example *either* of this, that, or the other special kind of colour. The words 'either, or' mark the distributive tie, and exclude the conception of colour as a single though indeterminate quality.

The distinction of the determinable and its determinates, though it presupposes generality, has none the less, as I said before, its own place and value if we regard it not as constitutive but epistemonic. In particular it is important in considering the nature of propositions. I have included this topic in my title. But I have left myself so little time, that I must be content with a brief indication of what I intended to say about it.

A proposition, whatever else it may be, is something proposed or set before the mind as the object of certain subjective processes—questioning, doubting, asserting, supposing, and also practical deliberation and decision. Belief and will do not necessarily consist in such processes. I may be aware of myself as sitting at a table and writing, without mentally asserting that this is so, and without at all questioning whether it is so or not. There is knowledge about things without any explicit mental act of judging. Similarly, I may voluntarily shake hands with a friend without any thought of doing otherwise, and therefore without choosing or deciding to shake hands. What is thus taken for granted constitutes a vast and vague background from which propositions emerge here and there.

Nothing takes shape as a proposition, either theoretical or practical, unless it is in some way suggested, however transiently, that from some general point of view it may or might be otherwise. If the thought of its being otherwise is prolonged, there is questioning or practical hesitation. If it is still further prolonged, and developed in detail, there is doubt or deliberation. Thus we may say that a proposition is apprehended as a possible alternative. What then is an alternative? There are two meanings of the word, distinct though inseparable. In one sense an alternative is such only relatively to the variable knowledge and interest of the individual. But this presupposes that the objective universe is so constituted as to present alternatives to the knowing and willing mind. Their existence is

ultimately implied in the existence of general classes or kinds, of generalities as the distributive unity of particular instances and subclasses. To have shape is to have this, that, or the other special sort of shape. This holds good whether or not some one knows which special shape the thing in fact has. Even when the thing is known or believed to be square it is still true that it is either square or round or octagonal or so forth. But a mind interested in knowing what the specific shape is, and already knowing it to be square, need not and does not concern itself with the existence of other alternatives, unless it is suggested, for example, by the words or behaviour of other persons. Otherwise the proposition that the thing is square will not occur to it at all. In mere supposition, the mind attends to the nature and implications of an alternative as such, ignoring, either provisionally or entirely, the question whether it is realized or to be realized. Consider the following. 'If I get this post I shall have no time for research work.' 'If I had been appointed to that post, I should have had no time for research work.' 'If there had been no carbon there would have been no organic life.' 'If there were no incompatible qualities, the logical law of contradiction would have no application.' These are all propositions about what, from some more or less general point of view, is an alternative possibility. They are propositions which have a proposition as their subject. They rarely occur where the alternative is already known or fully believed to be realized, or where it has already been practically decided that it shall be realized. On the contrary, they occur frequently where it is known that the alternative is not, and is not to be, realized. They are then called fictions.

This view implies that there really are alternative possibilities. Now, in the most natural and common use of language the real and possible are correlated and opposed in such wise that it is as absurd to say that the possible *quâ* possible is real, as it is to say that what is above is, as such, below. None the less, possibilities as such are not mere inventions of the understanding, or mere appearances. They really exist. Their existence is not merely possible. When a man has to choose between death and apostasy, these alternatives are really contained in the general situation with which he is confronted. But only one of them is realized. Which of them it shall be depends on the man himself. Only determinism gone mad could deny that, to this extent, there is free-will.

The meaning of the adjectives 'true' and 'false', in their ordinary use, presupposes the conception of the proposition as an alternative. Alternatives are such only in relation to some real fact. One of

them, and when they are fully distinguished, not more than one, is identical with the real fact. A proposition is true when it is identical with the realized alternative. To assert, deny, doubt, or suppose that this alternative is realized, is to assert, deny, doubt, or suppose what is true. The unrealized alternatives are false propositions.

Of course the distinction between truth and falsity holds also for the inarticulate domain of what is merely taken for granted. But it is only so far as alternatives are apprehended as such, i.e. as propositions, that we become aware of the distinction: then only can we consider and examine competing claims to truth. Even at this stage our assertions, denials, and doubts are, on the most important matters, conditioned and controlled by a vast background of what is merely taken for granted. If in this background there is anything which is incapable, from any point of view, of being apprehended as an alternative, then, though it may be transcendently important, we can never be aware of it as a proposition so as to express it in language and discuss it.

A word in conclusion on the metaphysical bearings of the logical doctrine of universals.

I have already indicated how the philosophy of those who maintain the unity of the universe is affected by the view that universals are qualities and relations. But it plays an equally important part with Mr. Russell, for whom there is no universe, but only an indefinite aggregate of disjointed items, each conceivably capable of existing by itself. As an integral part of this theory, he disjoins particulars and universals as two intrinsically independent realms of existence. He finds it possible to do this because, for him, qualities and relations are, as such, universals. Inasmuch as they are universals, they cannot in any way form part of the being of the particular things which they qualify or relate. On the other hand, inasmuch as they are qualities and relations, they cannot contain the particular things. Characters cannot contain what they characterize. It follows that the domain of concrete things and individuals in its own intrinsic being falls entirely apart from the domain of universals in their intrinsic being. From this point of view, we can understand Mr. Russell's distinction between acquaintance with things and knowledge about them, and his still more perplexing distinction between knowledge about and knowledge by description.

Plainly, the nature of general and abstract ideas is a topic which has the same philosophical importance now that it had for Berkeley; and however defective his treatment of it was, some things which he said deserve to be repeated even now—though with a difference.

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